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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Relief And Recovery Resources For The Citizens Of Puerto Rico

BOSTON— In the wake of the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Baker-Polito Administration today outlined the efforts Massachusetts is undertaking to provide assistance to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, including the formation of a task force that will ensure that the state is prepared to support residents of Puerto Rico who chose to self-evacuate the island and seek temporary or permanent residence in Massachusetts. State officials remain in communication with the Government of Puerto Rico and federal authorities and are ready and willing to offer emergency assistance, such as personnel and equipment, at the request of Puerto Rico.

“My heart breaks for the people of Puerto Rico, whose lives were turned upside down by the devastation of these merciless hurricanes,” **said Governor Baker**. “Puerto Rican communities across Massachusetts have also been traumatized by images of the destruction and by fears that loved ones there are in danger. Massachusetts is ready to welcome disaster survivors and our administration is preparing to support those who seek temporary or permanent residence in Massachusetts. We stand 100% ready to send help to Puerto Rico, including personnel and equipment and will remain in constant communication with Puerto Rican officials as well as the federal authorities managing recovery efforts.”

“The damaging impacts of the back-to-back Hurricanes in Puerto Rico is unimaginable and our hearts go out to everyone affected by the storms, especially as many are still

trying to make contact with loved ones,” **said Lt. Governor Polito**. “Massachusetts is ready and willing to offer emergency management support to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico at their request, and we urge everyone looking to help to heed the requests of Puerto Rico by supporting disaster relief operations through cash donations to organizations listed on our state website.”

MEMA is in the process of working with federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations to ensure that the state is ready to provide support for people who self-evacuate to Massachusetts from Puerto Rico. The Baker-Polito Administration is committed to meeting the needs of disaster survivors who seek temporary or permanent residence in Massachusetts by providing financial, housing, health care, jobs, and reunification services, as necessary. Representatives from MEMA, Housing and Community Development, Health and Human Services, Education and several other state and local agencies are convening to start preparations to support those who seek assistance in Massachusetts.

"The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and the Massachusetts National Guard have assets and personnel at the ready and can mobilize them post-haste if called upon to do so," **said Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Secretary Dan Bennett**, who oversees both agencies. "Puerto Rico and her citizens are foremost in our minds and we have made all necessary preparations to provide maximum support to ease the terrible suffering there."

The administration has been informed by the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), which works closely with FEMA and coordinates state-to-state mutual aid through the EMAC system, that due to extreme logistical challenges in Puerto Rico, such as damaged infrastructure and reduced capabilities at air strips, officials are strongly discouraging self-deployment of personnel and unsolicited donations of goods. At this time, Puerto Rico's mutual aid needs are being met by the deployment of federal resources, and by using the EMAC system to facilitate assistance from states. The public, which is eager to help, is being asked by Puerto Rico to make cash donations as follows:

- You can help support the recovery & reconstruction of Puerto Rico by directing donations to United for Puerto Rico, at <http://unitedforpuertorico.com>.
- Donate to the Red Cross, which is deeply involved in Puerto Rico's relief operations, by visiting <http://www.redcross.org>
- Donate to other disaster relief organizations working in Puerto Rico. Many of these organizations are listed on the website of the National Voluntary

Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD): <https://www.nvoad.org/current-disasters/werespond/>. The National VOAD asks people not to send unsolicited donated items.

Massachusetts is a member of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which functions as a national online system available for all states and territories, including Puerto Rico, to facilitate mutual aid and coordinate the provision of certain emergency management assets. MEMA continues to regularly monitor and respond to EMAC requests and is ready, willing, and able to assist if a request is made that the Commonwealth is able to fulfill; indeed, MEMA responded to an EMAC request from Puerto Rico to provide an EMAC support team, but Puerto Rico confirmed that the capability had been filled by another state.

The Commonwealth is willing and able to deploy a wide array of personnel and equipment at the request of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, including but not limited to:

- Sworn state and local police officers
- National Guard personnel and resources
- Hazardous Materials Technicians
- Environmental Assessment Teams
- Building, road and bridge inspectors
- Incident Management Assistance Teams
- Shelter supplies (cots, blankets, comfort kits) and Support Teams
- Animal Rescue, Veterinarian Teams and Animal Shelter Teams
- Swift and Moving Water Rescue Teams (personnel and boats)
- Heavy equipment (dump trucks, plows, front end loaders, etc.)
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Support Teams
- Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) A-Team
- Public Assistance Coordinators
- Fire-Based Technical Rescue Teams
- Mobile Command Centers
- Public Safety Communications Support/Restoration Teams

- Public Health Inspectors
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) specialists
- Coastal Zone Impact Assessment Personnel
- Fire and Fire Code Inspectors
- Saw crews
- Public Information Officers
- Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) staff
- Disaster Mental Health Teams
- Dive Teams

The Massachusetts National Guard (MANG) is in contact with the National Guard Bureau (NGB) as they work to identify and prioritize military resources needed for response operations in Puerto Rico. Similar to the EMAC program, MANG is willing and able to assist in recovery efforts should federal officials identify and request one of their resources.

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